DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 386 007 EC 304 209

AUTHOR Schmutz, Lori J.
TITLE From Early Intervention to Preschool: Preparing Parents for the Transition.
PUB DATE 95
NOTE 103p.; M.S. Practicum, Nova Southeastern University.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Practicum Papers (043)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC05 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Articulation (Education); Developmental Delays; *Disabilities; Early Intervention; *Information Needs; Knowledge Level; *Parent Education; Parent Rights; Parent School Relationship; Parent Workshops; Preschool Children; *Preschool Education; School Readiness; *Stress Variables; *Transitional Programs

ABSTRACT

This practicum addressed the anxiety and stress experienced by parents when their 3-year-old child with a disability or risk of developmental delay is transitioning from early intervention services to preschool. Questionnaires were administered to 20 parents to identify the causes of stress and anxiety during transitions and to determine their knowledge, involvement, and satisfaction with the transition. In addition, five staff members of the public schools were interviewed regarding preparation of parents for the transition. Factors which were found to contribute to parents' stress and anxiety concerned lack of parent involvement and information regarding the new program, the closed door policy of the new placement, and the lack of both a written transition plan and interagency collaboration. In response, four parent education workshops and a familiarization visit to the preschool programs were conducted. The workshops, which included both the sending and receiving teachers, addressed transitions, placement options, rights of parents of special needs children, and parent participation. The strategy was successful in reducing stress and anxiety levels of parents and increasing their knowledge of and confidence in the transition process. Appendices provide the pre/post-tests, interview form, and a workshop evaluation. (Contains 43 references.) (SW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED 386 007

From Early Intervention to Preschool: Preparing Parents for the Transition

by

Lori J. Schmutz

Cohort 6F

A Practicum Report Presented to the
Master's Program in Family Support Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Science

Nova Southeastern University

1995

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
L. Schmutz
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

EE304209

Authorship Statement

I hereby testify that this paper and the work it reports are entirely my own. Where it has been necessary to draw from the work of others, published or unpublished, I have acknowledged such work in accordance with accepted scholarly and editorial practice. I give testimony freely, out of respect for the scholarship of other workers in the field and in the hope that my own work, presented here, will earn similar respect.

3-1-95
Date

Lori J. Schmeltz
Signature of Student

Abstract

From early intervention to preschool: Preparing parents for the transition. Schmutz, Lori J., 1995: Practicum Report, Nova Southeastern University Master's Program for Family Support Studies. Descriptors: Transition to Preschool/Family Involvement in Transitions/Early Intervention/Transition Planning/Special Education for Preschoolers/Family Empowerment/Parent Education/Exceptional Children/Parent Advocacy.

Parents experience a great amount of stress and anxiety when it is time for their 3-year-old child to transition from early intervention to preschool. This is due, in part, to the lack of transition-related services available to parents.

The author designed and implemented a strategy intended to provide parents with opportunities to become more informed and involved in the transition process so that they would undergo less stress and anxiety and would feel more comfortable in allowing their child to enter a new program. The strategy involved a series of parent education workshops which focused on building the knowledge and involvement levels of parents regarding the transition process. Workshop topics included: The Effects of Transition on Our Lives, Program Options and Services, Parent Rights and Transition Planning.

The strategy was successful in reducing the stress and anxiety levels of parents as indicated by pre and post test results. Additionally, the strategy helped increase the knowledge level of parents regarding the transition process. Parents indicated that as a result of the parent education workshops, they felt more comfortable in allowing their 3-year-old child to attend a new program and that they would be more likely to actively participate in transition activities in the future. The series of parent education workshops will be conducted semiannually for the benefit of future parents of children transitioning from early intervention to preschool. Appendices include sample pre and post test forms, interview forms and a workshop evaluation form.

Table of Contents

Chapter		Page
I.	Introduction	5
	The setting	5
	The student's role	8
II.	Study of the Problem	9
	Problem statement	9
	Documentation of the problem	10
	Analysis of the problem	30
III.	Goals and Objectives	38
IV.	Solution Strategy	40
	Review of existing models	40
	Solution strategy employed	50
	Report of action taken	53
V.	Results	62
VI.	Conclusion	73
	Implications of results	73
	Recommendations	75
References		78
Appendices		
A	Parent Interview Form	85
B	Staff Interview Form	90
C	Workshop Evaluation Form	93
D	Implementation Plan	95
E	Pretest/Posttest Form	100

Chapter One

Introduction

In this chapter, the setting in which the problem occurs is described in terms of who is served and what services are provided. Additionally, my role in the practicum setting is described as well as that of my assistant.

The Setting

The setting of this practicum project is an early intervention program. It is a not-for-profit agency which was established in 1984 and provides services for children, ages birth thru 2 years, who are considered to be at high risk for developmental delays or who have established conditions. The criteria for establishing eligibility under the category of high risk includes: a developmental delay in cognition, language or physical development; while established conditions include disabilities such as Down Syndrome, Cerebral Palsy, Autism or Spina Bifida.

In 1986, Congress added a new program to Public Law 99-457, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, entitled Part H. This grant provides the state with funds to plan and implement a comprehensive, coordinated, community-based, family-centered system for early intervention for children birth thru 2 years who meet the above criteria.

In this practicum setting, the advent of Part H services has greatly increased the amount of services each

child is able to receive and has opened the boundaries for children from surrounding counties to attend its programs. It is the goal of this early intervention program to help children reach their maximum potential through the provision of services which promote growth in all developmental areas and Part H is a contributing factor in meeting that goal.

Referrals to the early intervention program come from Children's Medical Services (CMS), physicians, hospitals, parents or guardians, and Child Find, a program in the public school system that provides screening in the areas of communication, motor development, vision, hearing, and preschool readiness skills.

Once the referral is received in the program office, the family is contacted and a date for the evaluation of the child is set. The assessment is completed by a multidisciplinary team which includes an occupational therapist, a speech therapist, a developmental specialist, a social worker, a doctor and a nurse. The resulting document is a comprehensive overview of the child and his or her needs, including: a psychosocial history, a developmental history, a medical history, and recommendations for the child and family as they relate to therapy and intervention.

Once the evaluation has been completed, a Family Support Plan is created. This plan is the result of the process of parents and professionals working together to best meet the needs of the family and the child; building on family strengths and enhancing the capacity of families to

meet the needs of their handicapped child. The Family Support Plan outlines the services which are to be received by the family.

Services which are offered by the early intervention program include: educational training, case management, record keeping, family support, case coordination, home visits, adaptive equipment, consultations, developmental evaluations, parent education, child advocacy, parent networking, social interaction groups, transportation, and behavioral management. The goal of these services is to provide services to families that empower and strengthen adults in their roles as parents, nurturers and providers and to provide early intervention services to children in order to enhance normal child development, thereby preventing or minimizing any developmental problems which exist or may arise in the early years of life.

Once children turn 3 years of age, the law mandates that they be referred to the public school system for preschool special education programs. Children are no longer eligible for the services at this practicum setting at 3 years of age because the law states that services must not be duplicated. A list of the names of all children turning 3 years old is sent to the school system at the beginning of each calendar year so that the teachers may have a good idea of how many children to expect and make preparations for. The school system takes over the children's education once the child turns 3 years old.

The Student's Role

The early intervention program is staffed by two full time employees. I am the program coordinator and am responsible for screening, evaluating, scheduling, providing individual and group early intervention sessions, coordinating ancillary services, conducting Family Support Plan meetings, and billing. Other family support related responsibilities include parent networking, parent education and advocacy activities.

I have a degree in Special Education, which is a requirement of the position. Additionally, I must obtain at least 3 hours of training in the area of early intervention or child development annually.

The second staff member of the early intervention program is the early intervention assistant. The duties of this position include: providing individual and group sessions under the supervision of the program coordinator, assisting the coordinator, participating in Family Support Plan meetings, maintaining the room decor, and providing family support.

The early intervention assistant is a paraprofessional with 60 hours of training in child development. The position requires 30 hours of training in the area of early intervention or child development, with 3 additional hours in these areas annually.

Chapter Two

Study of the Problem

In this chapter, the problem that exists in the practicum setting will be described. Additionally, documentation to support the existence of the problem will be provided from three perspectives: literature, parent, and staff perspectives. Finally, the problem will be analyzed from these three perspectives and reasons for its existence will be provided.

Problem Statement

Parents undergo a great amount of stress when it is time for their 3-year-old child to transition from early intervention programs to public preschool special education. Early intervention programs are designed to help children who have handicaps or who are at risk to become developmentally delayed reach their maximum potential. The programs focus on working with the child and the family and continue until the child's third birthday at which time the transition to preschool takes place.

Times of transition are difficult and parents experience stress when they are not prepared for the transition. They are unsure of their changing roles and expectations and as a result, do not feel comfortable in allowing their child to enter a new program.

Other reasons parents experience stress during their child's transition to preschool may be attributed to a lack of knowledge about placement option locations, limited

knowledge about the purpose, content, and structure of the preschool programs, the abruptness of the transition, and to the lack of information about support services available in the new setting.

Documentation of the Problem

Literature Perspective

Transition may be defined as "the process or an instance of changing or passing from one form, state, subject, or place to another" (American Heritage Dictionary, 1976, p. 733). In the area of early intervention services, transition has been defined as the movement from one service component to another involving communication and cooperation between parents and the sending and receiving programs (Brandt, 1987). It may also be described as a process that is "a bridge between the security and structure offered by the present program and the opportunities and risks of a subsequent least restrictive environment" (Will, 1984, as cited in Wolery, 1989). Hutinger (1981), defines transition practices as the procedures used to bridge two programs. She further states that transition practices are "strategies and procedures that are planned and employed to insure the smooth placement and subsequent adjustment of the child as he or she moves from one program into another" (p. 8).

"Transitions are a part of life" (Fowler, Schwartz, & Atwater, 1991, p. 136), yet for many parents, the transition to a new setting creates stress and raises questions, no matter how often they have experienced change before (Fiechtl, Rule, & Innocenti, 1989).

The development of transition programs is one of the most prominent themes to emerge in special education in the past few years (McKenzie & Houk, 1993). This is due, in part to the fact that preschool special education services are mandated by every state and territory in the union for children ages 3 through 5 years who meet the eligibility criteria (Part B, Education of the Handicapped Act Amendments, 1986), and to the advent of Public Law 99-457, which emphasizes the transition of young handicapped children birth thru 3 years from early intervention programs to public preschool education (Lazzari & Kilgo, 1989; Turnbull, Turbiville, Jones & Lee, 1992; Fowler, 1988; Vincent, 1992; Rice & O'Brien, 1990). Because transition programs and the laws mandating them are so new, many programs have yet to implement any type of transition procedure. Until these transition procedures are in place, however, parents may undergo stress because of the gap in service delivery that occurs while transitioning from one program to another.

"Stress can be defined as the interaction of a particular event with an individual's perception of that event" (Lowenthal, 1987, p. 1). "Stress involves appraisals of: (a) situations or tasks confronting the individual, and (b) the individual's ability to deal successfully with these demands" (Lowenthal, 1987, p. 21). Stress occurs when a person feels his or her capabilities fall short of the capabilities needed to be successful at a task.

A change in program can be particularly stressful for families with children who have special needs (Fowler, 1982; Fowler, 1988; Chandler, 1993; Hanline, Suchman, & Demmerle, 1989). Parents often experience increased stress because of the many challenges and changes which occur during the transition period. At the same time, parents are forced to let go of the familiar support-system they established through their child's early intervention program; become familiar with a new educational and service delivery system in the preschool setting; and establish relationships with the professionals who will provide services for their child in the future (Hanline & Knowlton, 1988). The stresses experienced by family members of a handicapped or developmentally delayed child are intensified during periods of transition because everyone in the family is affected by the need to devote time to locate and arrange for services, by changes in routines and daily schedules, and by the alteration in family interactions that accompanies change in services provided to any one family member (Fowler, Chandler, Johnson & Stella, 1988).

In a study conducted by Bray, Coleman, and Bracken (1981), parents of handicapped children identified six critical events that occurred in their families. Results show that parents named circumstances surrounding their child's enrollment in school as the most critical event. Initial entry into school was specified as a time of increased stress due to a variety of issues related to their

child's disability. Among these issues is the fact that once their child has been deemed eligible for special education services, the child is often labeled as being "different". This is difficult not only for parents, but for siblings as well, due to the teasing from classmates who learn of the disability. Once their child has been labeled, parents must modify their expectations and goals and often become concerned about the social acceptance of their child in school (Fewell, 1986; Suelzle & Keenan, 1981, as cited in Hanline, 1988).

Families must make many stressful changes, including: finding new services, attending additional conferences, setting more goals, re-educating school personnel about their child's special needs, and adapting to school program differences such as decreases in parent-teacher contact and increases in child-teacher ratios (Johnson, Chandler, Kerns & Fowler, 1986).

Other potential stressors involved in the transition process for parents include: changes in staff, program format, location of services, scheduling, transportation system, manner and frequency with which communication with families occurs, learning about the IEP process, understanding their legal rights and responsibilities, teacher competence, the delivery of related services, putting their child on a bus for the first time at such a young age, and lack of an appropriate placement (Hanline et al., 1989; McDonald, Kysela, Siebert, McDonald, & Chambers, 1989; Wolery, 1989).

Stress is also created when parents are unsure about whether their child will be eligible for any preschool program. This occurs because states are given flexibility in determining eligibility criteria and the eligibility criteria for the early intervention program may be different from the eligibility criteria for the preschool program. According to Fowler, Hains, and Rosenkoetter (1990), "Concerns surrounding transition and eligibility for preschool services are likely to be greatest for states that adopt the at-risk criteria for infants and toddlers" (p. 56).

The at-risk criteria states that a child will be eligible for services even though the child may not be exhibiting a delay as great as 1.5 standard deviations below the mean on a standardized instrument. A child may be eligible for services under the at-risk criteria, for example, due to any of the following reasons: having a parent with a disability such as Cerebral Palsy, Autism, or Spina Bifida; having survived a catastrophic infectious or traumatic illness, such as encephalitis, meningitis, Reye's Syndrome, near-miss Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, near drowning, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, drug exposure, and pediatric AIDS, or having a statement from a physician that states that the child is at-risk for a developmental delay.

This practicum setting is located in a state that has adopted the at-risk criteria for infants and toddlers, hence many of the children receiving services in this setting may

not qualify for services under the preschool grants programs and may not meet the definition of handicapped as outlined in Education for the Handicapped Act - Part B. The uncertainty of whether or not services will continue causes anxiety for parents who question whether their children will be able to maintain the gains they achieved through the early intervention program and who argue that continued services are desirable to support the gains achieved (Fowler et al., 1990).

According to the literature, stress is increased when opportunities for family involvement in the transition process are limited (Fowler et al., 1991; Spiegel-McGill, Reed, Konig, & McGowan, 1990). "Providing for parent participation in preschool programs helps make the transition smoother because participation assures parents that they are making vital contributions to their child's educational program" (Hanline et al., 1989, p. 61). In addition to decreasing stress in parents, family involvement in transition procedures enable them to make more informed decisions about placement, interact productively with program staff, make reasonable adjustments in schedules, and solve other transition - related problems (Fowler et al., 1988).

Parent involvement may be defined as the active participation of parents in their child's educational programming with the goals of increasing and improving information sharing between parents and staff, increasing

public confidence in program accountability and providing emotional and informational support for parents (Wiegerink & Comfort, 1987). "The ultimate rationale for parent involvement in early childhood special education programs for children at risk due to handicapping conditions is to promote improved outcomes for children" (Karnes & Lee, 1980 as cited in Wiegerink & Comfort, 1987).

Family involvement in transitions is important because it allows families to have adequate information about the process, clarify their own concerns, facilitate the transition by providing information to programs, participate in placement decisions, and gain valuable insight into future transitions (Fowler et al., 1988; Spiegel-McGill et al., 1990).

Families should participate in the transition process because it is a right provided to them through Public Law 94-142, The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (Yoshida, Fenton, Kaufman, & Maxwell, 1978; Bray, et al., 1981; Bailey, & Simeonsson, 1984; Bricker, & Casuso, 1979; Welsh, & Odum, 1981). Public Law 99-457, The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, formerly the Education of the Handicapped Act, modified the requirements of P.L. 94-142 and created new services for infants and toddlers birth to 3 years of age and their families. This section of the law is entitled Part H, and was designed to increase family involvement in early intervention programs. This increased involvement is documented on an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP).

Individualized Family Service Plans encourage partnerships between parents and professionals (McBride, Brotherson, Joanning, Whiddon, & Demmitt, 1993; Fowler et al., 1990). They emphasize family-centered services rather than those focused solely on the child. The family-centered process puts parents at ease because they are empowered through the process and feel more in control of their childrens' future placements (Dunst, & Deal, 1992; McBride et al., 1993; Hanline et al., 1989; Turnbull et al., 1992; Vincent, 1992; Dunst, Trivette, & Deal, 1988).

Parents should be involved in all aspects of their child's education and especially in the transition process. Parents, afterall, are the experts when it comes to their child. Parents of handicapped children have a unique understanding of their child and often have a keen sense of what types of services their child needs and of the most effective methods of service delivery (Smith, 1992).

Parents of children with disabilities become the single common element in all of the activities, services and life events that their child experiences. Smith (1992) states that parents are the "glue" that holds it all together. They are the ones to provide the lifetime link in the service chain through which the child moves during his life" (Smith, 1992, p. 35).

In a study completed by Johnson, et al., (1986), 19 families were interviewed following their child's transition from preschool intervention to kindergarten for the purpose

of determining family concerns regarding the transition process. Results show that most parents expressed concerns about their involvement in the transition process and experienced a degree of transition-related stress.

In a similar study conducted by Hamblin-Wilson & Thurman (1990), 91 parents were interviewed for the purpose of studying the perceptions of parents whose children had gone from placement in early intervention programs to placement in the public schools. Results show that while all the parents reported being involved in the transition process, only 54% actually participated in transition planning. A factor analysis of specific responses showed that parents were more satisfied with the transition process when they were given explanations and support from the sending and receiving programs.

In a study conducted by Hanline (1988), 38 parents whose children had been identified as being ready for transition and 54 parents whose children were already in preschool were asked to rate the helpfulness of 19 specific areas of information as well as the helfulness of 9 specific transition support services. Results show that parents' major concerns centered around the lack of information about public school services, anxiety about working with a new and unfamiliar agency, and the uncertainty of whether their child would receive appropriate services.

Involving parents in the transition process benefits parents, professionals, and children and is necessary if stress is to be minimized.

Chapter Three

Goals and Objectives

It has been established through a literature search and through interviews that the transition of 3-year-old children from an early intervention program to preschool programs in the public schools creates stress and anxiety for parents. A lack of knowledge and involvement in the transition process by parents contributes to these feelings. It has also been established through staff and parent interviews that there are a lack of training opportunities for parents to help them become more informed about their child's transition which would enable them to feel more competent and willing to become more involved in their child's transition.

Goal

The overall goal of this practicum project is for parents to become more knowledgeable about and involved in what happens during their child's transition, as well as to become more knowledgeable about what the new program entails, so that the stress and anxiety they undergo may be kept to a minimum.

In order to meet this goal, four specific objectives have been developed.

Objectives

(1) To increase the knowledge level of parents who have children transitioning from early intervention to public preschool regarding the transition process within the ten-week implementation period.

Desired Outcome: A service will be developed which will increase the knowledge level of parents as measured by pre and post test results.

(2) To decrease the stress level of parents whose children are transitioning from early intervention to preschool within the ten-week implementation period.

Desired Outcome: A service will be developed which will decrease the stress level of parents as measured by pre and post test results.

(3) To decrease the anxiety level of parents whose children are transitioning from early intervention to preschool within the ten-week implementation period.

Desired Outcome: A service will be developed which will decrease the anxiety level of parents whose children are transitioning from early intervention to preschool as measured by pre and post test results.

(4) To increase the active participation of parents in the transition process within the ten-week implementation period.

Desired Outcome: A service will be developed that will result in the parents becoming more actively involved in their child's future transitions as measured by pre and post test results.

The literature clearly supports the statement that parents experience stress and anxiety during times of transition and that a lack of family involvement adds to their stress and anxiety levels. Questionnaires were administered to parents to document specific causes of stress and anxiety during transitions and to document their knowledge, involvement, preparation and satisfaction with the transition from this practicum setting to public preschool. Additionally, questionnaires were administered to staff members of the public school system for the purpose of documenting whether they feel parents are prepared for the transition, how much assistance is offered to parents during the transition, and what suggestions they have for improving the transition process.

Parent Perspective

Twenty parents of children who have exited the early intervention program within the past 3 years participated in completing a questionnaire. These parents were chosen randomly from a sampling of all the parents whose children exited the early intervention program and entered the public school preschool program within the past 3 years.

The questionnaire was administered in an interview format and was presented verbally to parents. It was composed of 22 questions, including open and closed-ended questions and Likert scale rating questions. A sample parent questionnaire entitled "Parent Interview Form" has been included as Appendix A.

The results of the parent questionnaires indicate that parents do, in fact, experience stress and anxiety during the transition of their child from early intervention to public preschool. Sixteen of the 20 parents interviewed rated their stress levels as "very high." It is important to note that these same 16 parents also rated their anxiety levels as "very high." Not one parent rated their stress or anxiety levels as "very low", while only one parent indicated that her stress and anxiety levels were "somewhat low." The mean score for the two items relating to the stress and anxiety levels of parents during their child's transition, is 3.8, as shown in Table 1. This high number indicates that parents experience quite a lot of stress and anxiety.

Several of the parents indicated that they were undergoing a great amount of stress and anxiety because they felt they were not prepared to see their 3 year old child leave home to attend a full day program. They said they enjoyed having their child at home and taking him or her to the necessary therapies and early intervention appointments.

All of the parents interviewed indicated that they did not receive any assistance from the school system in completing the paperwork that was required for their child's placement into the new setting, as shown in Table 1. I asked several parents whether they found the paperwork to be manageable and they indicated that there were many forms to complete and that they did not understand how to respond to many of the items.

Table 1

Mean Scores of Parent Responses to Transition Issues

Issue	Mean Score
Stress level	3.8
Anxiety level	3.8
Assistance offered in completing paperwork	1.0
Clarity of explanation of parental rights	1.4
Activity level	2.1
Influence on placement decision	1.9
Explanation on home-school communication	1.6
Knowledge level of transition process	1.1
Satisfaction with opportunity to participate in IEP	1.3
Degree of follow-up by early intervention program	3.3
Importance of sending/receiving teachers meeting	4.0

Scale: 1-4, where 1= low amount and 4= high amount

Over the past few years, I have offered to assist many parents with the required paperwork. I found the developmental and social history pages to be quite lengthy and the many releases to be wordy and full of technical jargon. It is no wonder parents feel stress and anxiety. One parent indicated that she was worried that if she did not complete the paperwork appropriately that her child would not be eligible for services.

Another concern several parents shared was the unclear explanation they were given regarding their due process rights as parents. Fourteen parents (70%) responded that they found the explanation to be "very unclear." The mean score for the item was a low 1.4, where 1 = very unclear and 4 = very clear, as indicated in Table 1.

The parents stated that the extent of the explanation they received regarding their parental rights and the due process procedure was a pamphlet that they were encouraged to "take home and look over." One parent said that it seemed as though the school had something to hide because they did not explain the parental rights, leaving parents defenseless to dispute any differences that may occur. This parent felt she was unequipped to stand up for herself and her child if differences of opinion did arise.

The mean score for parent activity level in the transition from early intervention to public preschool was 2.1, as shown in Table 1. This score indicates that on the average, parents were somewhat inactive. Six of the parents

indicated that they were very inactive in their child's transition. When I questioned three of these parents as to why they were not active, they said that they were told by the public school staff that there was nothing for them to do except "wait". It did not surprise me when the mean score for parental influence on the placement decision was 1.85, as also indicated in Table 1. If the parents are really told to just "wait", then they probably do not have much influence on any decisions regarding their child's transition.

The results of the parent interviews indicate that on the average, parents were notified of their child's eligibility for public preschool when their child was 27.7 months old. Seventy-five percent of the parents indicated that they felt they had enough notice of transition into the public school system, as indicated in Table 2. The parents of children who attend this practicum setting are informed of their child's eligibility for public preschool programs during their initial intake into the early intervention program. I personally explain this information to the parents so that they know what the future holds for their child and are not shocked with the information right before their child's third birthday; leaving them unprepared and uninformed.

The parents felt that at least 6 months notice should be given to them regarding the transition planning of their child from the early intervention program to public

Table 2

Percentage of Parents Who Agreed to the Following Statements

Statement	Percentage
Received enough notice of transition into preschool	75%
Received explanation of parental rights and responsibilities	70%
Had the opportunity to visit placement options	0%
Had the opportunity to meet receiving teacher before school began	10%
Found that the major steps in the transition process were planned	20%
A meeting was held between sending/receiving teachers	0%

preschool. Sixteen parents, or 80% of parents, responded that transition planning should begin 6 months before their child's placement into preschool. The remaining 4 parents (20%) felt that transition planning should begin at least a year before their child begins preschool. When I asked one parent why she responded one year and she said that she needed at least that much time to prepare herself for all the changes that accompany her child's entrance into the school system. She said, "My child could have been ready in a week, but I needed a year to get myself ready."

All 20 parents stated that they were not given the opportunity to view the placement options before their child was placed, as indicated in Table 2. This caused them to feel anxiety about whether their child would receive the best possible placement. Six parents said they requested the opportunity but were denied by preschool administrators.

One hundred percent of the parents interviewed indicated that it is "very important" for the sending and receiving teachers from the early intervention and preschool programs to meet, as indicated in Table 1. One parent said, "Next to my husband and me, the early intervention staff knows my daughter's needs better than anyone and they need to communicate with the new teacher to ensure that she receives the services she needs."

Unfortunately, 100% of the parents interviewed indicated that the sending and receiving teachers did not meet, as shown in Table 2. While talking with one parent

about his issue, she said, "You know, when the sending and receiving teachers failed to meet before my son's placement, I felt like the chain of services broke in half and that the continuity of his education was hampered." This parent went on to say that teachers from both programs must meet if there is to be a smooth transition and if the child is to adjust more readily.

All of these factors add up to stress and anxiety for parents who simply want the best possible education for their child. Parents are not knowledgeable or involved enough in the process to feel comfortable in allowing their young child to enter preschool.

Staff Perspective

Five staff members of the public school system who are on the receiving end of the transition process were interviewed using a questionnaire designed to gather information on the support that is available for parents whose children are transitioning from and early intervention program to their preschool programs. The questionnaire, entitled "Staff Interview Form", consists of 10 items. It asked staff members whether they felt parents were prepared for their child's transition; whether they offered assistance to the parents in the process; whether they felt the current transition system was satisfactory and finally, were asked what suggestions they had for improving the transition process for parents. The interviews provided a valuable insight into the lack of services for parents of

preschool children. A sample of staff interview form has been included as Appendix B.

The staff members interviewed represent several different disciplines, including: 1 school psychologist, 1 staffing specialist, 1 speech/language pathologist and 2 preschool special education teachers.

The results of the staff interviews for the most part, reflect what the parents said during their interviews. There were, however, several items where the staff members said they offered a service that parents stated they did not receive.

All of the staff members stated that parents are not offered the opportunity to view the placement options before the child is staffed, as shown in Table 3. One staff member said that the parents never request to view the options. Another said that this practice is not permitted due to rules concerning the confidentiality of the other students in the classroom. The parents and staff members agreed on this item as demonstrated by the fact that 100% of the parents stated that they were not offered the opportunity to view the placement options.

Table 3

Percentage of Staff Who Agreed to the Following Statements

Statement	Percentage
Parents were provided the opportunity to view placement options	0%
Transition training was provided	20%

Another item in which there was consensus by 100% of the staff members was the importance of the sending and receiving teachers meeting during the transition process. The mean score for this item was 4.0 where 1 = very unimportant and 4 = very important, as indicated in Table 4. All of the parents agreed on the importance of this item and also had a mean score of 4.0. The parents indicated that this issue caused stress and anxiety when it did not occur, so I asked several staff members why sending and receiving teachers were not meeting. They said that it is not always possible to know who the receiving teacher will be, so they are unable to arrange any meetings. Several staff members said that this is an area they are currently working to improve so that a smoother transition may be made that will put parents more at ease and assist in an easier adjustment for the child.

One of the items in which the staff members responses differed greatly from the parents perceptions of the service offered was the assistance offered in completing the required paperwork. The mean score for the staff members was 3.2, where 1 = none and 4 = a great amount, as indicated in Table 4. The mean score for parents was 1.0. These scores show a large discrepancy. It is apparent, however, that if parents perceive a need for some assistance, then more needs to be offered. It could be possible that the staff members assume that the paperwork is self-explanatory since they are very familiar with it, when in fact, parents find it confusing, stressful, and overwhelming.

Table 4

Mean Scores of Staff Responses to Transition Issues

Issue	Mean Score
Importance of sending/receiving teachers meeting	4.0
Assistance offered in completing paperwork	3.2
Explanation of due process	3.0
Preparedness of parents for transition	1.2
Satisfaction with transition process	3.0
Explanation of program purpose	3.6
Explanation of program structure	3.6
Explanation of program content	3.6
Explanation of program locations	3.6
Extent of parent involvement in placement decision	3.6

Scale: 1-4, where 1= low amount and 4= high amount

Another item where the responses differed greatly was the explanation of due process. Staff members showed a mean score of 3.0, where 1 = very inadequate and 4 = very adequate, as indicated in Table 4. Parents showed a mean score of 1.4 on the item about the clarity of their explanation of parental rights, where 1 = very unclear and 4 = very clear. These items are essentially the same but were worded differently to make the idea more clear for parents. Two of the staff members mentioned the technical jargon that is involved in the due process procedure and said that they use layman's terms to help the parents understand the procedure. They did state that pamphlets were sent home, but only after a thorough explanation of the contents of them.

It is interesting to note that 80% of the staff members felt that parents are "very unprepared" for the transition of their child from early intervention to preschool, yet 100% of the staff members said they were "relatively satisfied" with the current transition process, as also indicated in Table 4. All the staff members interviewed gave good suggestions for improving the transition process, however, one wonders how much effort will be made to improve the current process since they say they are "relatively satisfied" with the process the way it is.

Analysis of the Problem

Parents undergo stress and anxiety during transitions for many reasons. I would like to focus on five of the factors that contribute to this problem.

Based on the interviews conducted with parents who have been through the transition process and through a search of the literature, it can be stated that parent involvement plays a big role on the stress and anxiety levels of parents. When families are involved in the transition process, their individual needs are considered which enables them to function better (Johnson, et al., 1986). Becoming involved in their child's transition helps parents become more confident and competent, and as a result, reduces their stress and anxiety.

The parents in this practicum setting are not very active in their child's transition as witnessed by the fact that 14 out of the 20 parents interviewed responded that they were either "very inactive" or "somewhat inactive" in the transition process. These parents stated that their lack of involvement made them feel unprepared for the change and caused them to feel stress and anxiety. The lack of parent involvement in transitions is a problem which must be overcome if parents and their children are to experience a less stressful and smoother transition.

The second reason that parents experience stress and anxiety during their child's transition from early intervention to public preschool is due to a lack of information about the preschool program. The parents interviewed felt that they did not know much about the program their child was entering before he or she began the program. They said the lack of information created fear of

the unknown, and that the fear caused anxiety for their families. Ninety percent of the parents interviewed rated their knowledge level about the transition process as "very low." These parents felt this way because they had no information on the new program.

In a study conducted by Hanline (1988), parents of young children with disabilities were surveyed and results show that one of the major concerns of parents was their lack of information about the school district's programs and services. These parents indicated that if they were provided with information about the schools' programs, they would gain the knowledge needed in order to become an active part of the decision-making process, ultimately allowing them to obtain the most appropriate special education and related services for their child.

When staff members were interviewed regarding the adequacy of the explanation of the purpose, structure, content and locations of the preschool programs, all of them indicated that the explanation was given either "adequately" or "very adequately." This is a real problem since parents do not feel they receive an adequate explanation of anything regarding the new program.

If parents are to experience a smooth transition and undergo less stress, they need to be given as much information about the new program as possible.

A third factor that contributes to the problem is the closed door policy that many of the public schools portray.

It is often very difficult to gain entry into any of the preschool special education programs. The reason given for the denial is confidentiality. Public school staff members state that until a child has been staffed and placed into a particular classroom, the parents are not allowed to view it. This "unknown" makes parents wary of what lies behind closed doors.

Early intervention program staff also have difficulty gaining entry into the classrooms. This results in early intervention staff being uninformed about the preschool program's purpose, structure, content, and locations. Without the knowledge that would be obtained through a classroom visit, early intervention staff are unable to put the parents as ease and answer the many questions regarding the preschool program.

All 20 of the parents interviewed said that they were not given the opportunity to visit each placement option. Until the opportunity is given to parents to visit each placement option and learn about their child's new setting, parents will continue to undergo undue stress and anxiety during transitions.

The fourth factor that contributes to undue stress and anxiety for parents during the transition of their child from early intervention to public preschool is the lack of a written transition plan. Although Part H of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Public Law 99-457, requires that the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) include

transition plans for the child to link him or her to other services, (Kilgo, Richard & Noonan, 1989) this is not being done. After a thorough review of the files of children who have exited this practicum setting in the past year, it can be stated that transition plans have not been included on any of them.

Section 300.154 of the Regulations Implementing IDEA Part B states that "each state plan must set forth policies and procedures relating to the smooth transition for those individuals participating in the early intervention program under Part H of the Act who will participate in preschool programs assisted under this part..." (1993, p. 268).

The problem is that many states have not yet completed their transition plans which leaves a large gap in service delivery to families of 3-year-old special needs children. Without a written transition plan, smooth transitions are unlikely. Written transition plans are needed to ensure that gaps in service delivery do not occur and to ensure that an appropriate placement is made for the child that is supported by parents. Transition planning is a must if parents are to be prepared and have responsibilities of their own in their child's transition while keeping their stress and anxiety levels to a minimum.

The fifth and final factor that contributes to the problem is the lack of interagency collaboration. The transition from early intervention requires collaboration of both the sending and receiving programs (Hanline & Knowlton,

1988). "Undoubtedly, the expertise and involvement of the professional staff of both programs are helpful in easing transitions" (Spiegel-McGill et al., 1990, p. 67).

The parents who were interviewed indicated that when their child was transitioning from this practicum setting, there was no meeting held between the sending and receiving teachers. The staff members from the public preschool program also stated that, in fact, there were no meetings held between programs. Every individual interviewed stated that it was "very important" for sending and receiving teachers to meet, yet no meetings were held. This resulted in stress and anxiety for parents.

According to Fowler (1988), interagency collaboration is crucial if stress is to be kept to a minimum during transitions. She further states that interagency collaboration involves communication and coordination of a written plan between the sending and receiving programs. Without interagency collaboration, it is difficult to coordinate evaluations, staffings, exchanges of records, and the development of a sense of trust between programs which is critical to ensuring a successful and timely new placement (Fowler et al., 1991).

During a series of workshops, Fowler, Rosenkoetter and Hains (1991) surveyed 120 school district participants. The results show that a lack of communication between programs is a barrier to smooth transition planning. Conn-Powers, Ross-Allen, and Holburn (1990) conducted a similar study and

found that when professionals from the sending a receiving programs work collaboratively, many barriers to a smooth transition process, such as a lack of planning time and resources and lack of record sharing, are addressed and corrected.

Interagency coordination is crucial when agencies must identify funding sources to cover the cost of transition-related services, especially when the agency directing the early intervention program is different from the agency directing the preschool program (Fowler et al., 1990). Problems arise for families when there is a break in services between the two programs because of the lack of interagency agreements.

In this practicum setting, children may be eligible to attend the public system at the age of 3 years. If, however, a child's birthday falls during the summer months when school is not in session, services are abruptly terminated. This occurs because there is no agreement as to who will pay for the services during the transition time. This is very stressful for parents who worry that their child will regress in development during the weeks and months that their child is out of intervention.

Federal regulations governing both programs state that interagency agreements should be flexible, contain appropriate procedures and activities, and identify funding sources so that lapses in the delivery of services will not occur. Until interagency coordination is improved,

families will continue to undergo stress and anxiety and their children will experience gaps in service delivery.

These five factors, as well as several others, which contribute to the problem of stress and anxiety for parents during their child's transition from early intervention to public preschool special education programs, must be dealt with if the problem is to be solved. Some degree of stress and anxiety is to be expected during the transition process, however, parents should not have to suffer undue stress and anxiety because of a lack of transition services.

The intent of this practicum project then, is to develop and implement strategies that will reduce the stress and anxiety of parents by dealing with the problems that have been discovered through parent and staff interviews and through a search of the literature.

Chapter Four

Solution Strategy

The purpose of this chapter is to present and critique examples of existing programs, models, and approaches as discovered through a literature search and through staff interviews. The chapter will highlight the solution strategy that was implemented in this practicum project, explain its rationale and feasibility, and describe the evaluation process. Finally, the solution strategy employed will be described in terms of the action taken.

Review of Existing Models

There are many promising models in existence for planning and facilitating the transition of young children from one program to another. The literature consistently refers to three of these. I will highlight each one and describe the strengths and limitations of each. Additionally, I will share several other transition strategies that are currently being utilized by programs as identified in the literature and through staff interviews. Finally, I will share twelve activities that are critical to transition planning that most programs address, as identified by Fowler et al. (1991).

The first model designed to plan and facilitate the transition of young children from one program to another is called Project TEEM, which stands for Training into the Elementary Education Mainstream. Project TEEM is a model that was designed to provide school systems with information

and guidelines for transition planning. The model's purposes are to address the concerns expressed by parents and professionals regarding entry into the public schools, promote the implementation of best practices, and facilitate the transition of all children with handicaps to their new settings (Fowler, 1988).

Project TEEM consists of two major components. The first component involves establishing a transition planning team comprised of all key individuals, informing and involving the child's family, preparing the child for the new placement, monitoring and supporting the child's placement, and planning future transitions.

The second component provides guidelines for school systems to develop a transition process. Fowler (1988) lists these guidelines as (a) gaining system-wide support and involvement; (b) developing written procedures that encompass the best practices and promote timely and systematic transitions, and (c) identifying and obtaining the training and resources to establish and support the transition process.

Conn-Powers et al. (1990) state that the best practices in planning transitions involve individualizing the transition planning process to address the specific type and amount of planning necessary for each child and family, beginning well before the child enters the new program (at least one year for children whose transition may require a great amount of planning and preparation); and promoting the

collaborative efforts of the child's parents, sending and receiving teachers, education staff, related services personnel, the principal, and other relevant individuals.

Project TEEM was developed and field tested across five school districts in Vermont. The success of the model was determined by evaluating its impact upon the cooperating schools' transition practices and corresponding professional/parent satisfaction with transition practices and by child placement outcomes (Conn-Powers et al., 1990). Based on a 5-point Likert scale, parents rated their satisfaction with the school's transition planning procedures with a mean of 4.3, while the mean score for professional satisfaction was 4.0.

The TEEM model has many strengths in regard to facilitating smooth transitions for children and their families. The steps of establishing a planning team, developing goals and identifying problems, developing written transition planning procedures, gaining system-wide support and commitment, and evaluating the transition process have been tested and proven to be effective for reducing the challenges faced by parents during their child's transition. Although this model focuses on the transition of handicapped preschoolers to the elementary education mainstream, its goals are applicable to the transition of children to many varied settings such as this practicum setting.

Project TEEM is a comprehensive transition planning

process that would meet the objectives that have been developed for this practicum project. It would increase the knowledge level of parents, decrease their stress and anxiety, and encourage more parent involvement in their child's transition to preschool.

A second model in existence for facilitating smooth transitions and decreasing stress and anxiety for parents is called Project BEST. Project BEST stands for Building Effective School Transitions. This model consists of a manual and a Transition Planner.

The manual includes guidelines for:

(a) developing interagency agreements;

(b) communicating between the home and service program;

(c) involving families in decision making;

(d) constructing a timeline for each child's transition;

(e) identifying local agencies for referral;

(f) preparing the child for a change of programs;

(g) evaluating the family's and program's satisfaction with the transition process (Fowler, 1988, p. 62).

The Transition Planner helps parents identify and prioritize their child and family needs as they relate to the transition. It includes a skills readiness survey which is completed by both the sending and receiving teachers in order to identify similarities and differences in program expectations several months before the transition.

Project BEST, if implemented in this practicum setting, would meet the objectives delineated in Chapter Three. The manual consists of many elements that would decrease the stress and anxiety of parents whose 3-year-olds are transitioning to preschool from early intervention. Additionally, families would be more likely to become involved in future transition activities due to the level of preparation they would attain as a result of the many activities Project BEST offers.

The third model designed to plan and facilitate the transition of young children from one program to another is called Project STEPS, which stands for Sequenced Transition to Education in the Public School. The purpose of this model is to use a community-wide interagency approach to helping children with handicaps and their families make a successful transition from a preschool program to the least restrictive environment in the public schools (Fowler, 1988).

Project STEPS utilizes a manual which describes procedures for establishing an interagency group and implementing transition timelines and procedures. This model encourages cross-program visitation between the sending and receiving teachers and focuses on getting parents involved in the transition process, either through one-on-one counseling or group training.

Although Project STEPS was designed for the transition planning of preschoolers to the least restrictive

environment, many of its aspects would help decrease the stress and anxiety of parents whose children are transitioning from early intervention to preschool. Parents have indicated that they feel it is very important for sending and receiving teachers to meet; that their stress and anxiety would be decreased if this meeting took place. Project STEPS emphasizes the meeting of sending and receiving teachers in its strategies. It also emphasizes parent involvement, which is a must if parents are to be informed, prepared, and capable regarding their child's transition.

Because Project STEPS was designed for the preschooler transitioning to the least restrictive environment, it focuses heavily on an entry level skills checklist, which is used to identify social and behavioral skills that help young children to be independent and enhance their successful placement. This topic is not a major focus of this practicum project because the problem focuses more on the stress and anxiety of parents, not on the readiness skills of the child.

A transition strategy that was recently developed in Duval County, Florida involves the creation of a new position entitled Transition Social Worker. The major responsibilities of this position include serving as a liaison between families, community agencies, and the local education agency. This person is directly responsible for coordinating the transition process.

The transition of a child from one agency to another is a critical time for families and stress and anxiety are very common as a result of the change. The Transition Social Worker, however, helps make the transition a more positive experience for the child and family. This is done by making initial contact at least 6 months prior to the child's third birthday, at the same time the compilation of necessary paperwork begins. The Transition Social Worker also shares pertinent information with the parents and gives them a booklet describing what to expect during the transition. The social worker stays in contact with the family and the child's service provider until the child is staffed into a public school program.

This position helps expedite the transition process and relieves the stress and anxiety of families. In addition, it has improved the communication between the local education agency and service providers.

Although the strategy of hiring a Transition Social Worker is very effective in relieving stress and anxiety and increasing the knowledge level of parents regarding the transition process, it is not a strategy that is feasible for this practicum setting due to budget restrictions.

Another transition strategy that is currently being utilized by a program called Archway, Inc., is a transition parent meeting. There are 3 purposes of the transition meeting: to inform parents of the programs their children might attend, to expose parents to personnel from each

program, and to have the new program directors answer parents' questions regarding their child's enrollment in a future program (Wheeler, Reetz, & Wheeler, 1993). As a result of this strategy, parents are able to make more informed decisions regarding their child's future program.

The transition parent meeting is a very effective strategy for increasing the knowledge level of parents and increasing the likelihood that they will become more involved in later transition activities. It would be effective in meeting some of the objectives of this practicum project.

One final transition strategy involves educating and empowering parents to become long-term, independent, informed advocates for their children, which is crucial to the success of transition planning (Bradley, 1987; Dunst & Trivette, 1987, as cited in Spiegel-McGill et al., 1990). This approach enables parents to become active participants, is likely to reduce their transition-related stress, and will provide parents with the necessary knowledge to independently prepare for future transitions (Fowler et al., 1988). This transition model provides parents with guidance, information, and training during the transition of their 3-year-old from an infant home-based early intervention program to a center-based preschool.

The model consists of 6 workshops and incorporates a dual approach of group and individual training. The workshops take place during the 6 month period prior to the

child's exiting the infant program. Topics of the workshops include: The Effects of Transition on Our Lives, which helps parents understand the implications of transition; Knowing Your Child, being able to assess their child's skills and needs; Program Options and Services, learning to identify potentially appropriate placements; Effective Communication, knowing how to communicate effectively with professionals; Educational Rights, understanding parental rights under educational law; and Putting the Puzzle Together, making well-informed decisions based on careful planning and preparation.

This model would effectively meet the objectives of this practicum project. Each of the objectives would be addressed through the series of workshops. The training topics are relevant to this practicum setting because they were designed for parents whose children are exiting an early intervention program and entering preschool.

According to Fowler et al. (1991), the following twelve activities are addressed by most transition model programs. The activities include:

1. Agreement on exit criteria from preschool.
2. Discussion with families regarding the exit criteria, timeline for child's transition from the program, consent for release of information, and the parents' role in planning the transition.
3. Notification of the receiving agency or agencies that child will be entering their service system.
4. Evaluation of child to determine current level

of development.

5. Staffing of the child with representatives from the sending and receiving program and family members to determine eligibility for continued special services.
6. Development of the IEP, if the child is eligible for continued special education services.
7. Identification of placement options based on the principle of least restrictive environment, but only after the child's needs are determined to ensure that placement is appropriate and not based simply on what classrooms are available.
8. A visit to each placement option by parents and by sending program staff; a visit to the sending program by staff from the receiving school.
9. Decision regarding placement by family and staffs.
10. A review of procedural safeguards and transfer of appropriate records.
11. A visit by child and parent to the new classroom and discussion of home-school communication strategies.
12. Follow-up by sending and receiving programs to determine if the transition has produced a good fit between child and family and the new program. (p. 142).

These activities have also been recommended by Conn-Powers et al. (1990); Fowler et al. (1988); Hanline

(1988); Kilgo et al. (1989) and Wolery (1989). It is obvious that successful transition programs should contain most if not all of these steps. Each one is important for informing parents, getting them involved and reducing their transition-related stress and anxiety.

Solution Strategy Employed

A number of strategies have been identified through a search of the literature that have proven to be effective in reducing transition-related stress and anxiety in parents of 3-year-olds exiting an early intervention program and entering preschool. Additionally, these strategies have increased the knowledge and involvement levels of parents, which is essential for easing the transition process.

I felt that the key to meeting the goals and objectives of this practicum project was to focus on and solve the five factors that contributed to the problem, as identified in Chapter Two. In order to solve these problems, many of the ideas presented in the existing models were utilized.

To review, the five factors that contributed to the problem of transition-related stress and anxiety for parents were (1) lack of parent involvement, (2) lack of information regarding the new program, (3) the closed door policy of the new placement, (4) lack of a written transition plan, and (5) lack of interagency collaboration.

The strategy I chose to address the problem involved parent education in a workshop format. Four workshops and a familiarization visit to the preschool programs were held at

a time most convenient for parents and other parties involved, and focused on meeting the family's needs as they relate to the transition process. This strategy closely resembles those of Wheeler et al. (1993), and Spiegel-McGill et al. (1990).

The workshops were developed and conducted by me, my assistant, and several of the staff members from the preschool special education program, as well as the prekindergarten staffing specialist.

The rationale for choosing this strategy to address the practicum project was based on a review of the literature, staff and parent interviews, and previous experiences. Stress and anxiety are high during transitions, often times due to a lack of knowledge and involvement, therefore parent education was used to solve the problem by making parents more knowledgeable about transitions, the placement options, their rights as parents of special needs children, and the importance of their active participation. Educating parents about transitions is likely to reduce their stress and will help insure a successful transition (Spiegel-McGill et al., 1990).

The most crucial element of the parent education workshops was the presence of not only the parents, but of the sending and receiving teachers. Staff in the sending and receiving program contribute to the ease or difficulty with which children and families experience a change in programs (Fowler et al., 1991). Communication between the

family and the sending and receiving programs must be established if transitions are to be smooth and family stress reduced (Fowler et al., 1990). When sending and receiving teachers meet they are able to help prepare the child and family for transition and develop procedures to facilitate sharing records and other information about the child, family, and programs (Hains et al., 1989).

Interagency collaboration is not possible without the meeting of the sending and receiving teachers, therefore a meeting was held to determine the roles and responsibilities of each provider. Once this meeting had taken place, transitions were better coordinated, information was shared more freely, program options were made clear, communication between programs was no longer a barrier, and the two programs continue to collaborate to see that there are no gaps in service delivery for children who turn 3 years old over the summer.

Another benefit of the sending and receiving teachers attending the workshops was the chance parents had to meet the new teacher and begin to trust in a new person. The sooner parents felt comfortable with the new teacher, the less stress and anxiety they experienced.

Other options were considered, such as the TEEM, BEST and STEPS models, however time and cost restraints would not allow for these models to be utilized. Strategies for the practicum project were required to fit within the time restraint, specifically, the ten-week implementation

period. Ideas from these models, however, were employed in the workshops which were held.

Evaluation Process

The evaluation process for this practicum project consisted of a pretest, which was administered before the implementation phase and was designed to measure the knowledge, stress, anxiety, and involvement levels of parents regarding their child's transition to preschool; as well a posttest, which was administered following the completion of the implementation phase and was designed to measure changes in the knowledge, stress, anxiety, and involvement levels of the parents. Additionally, parents completed a workshop evaluation form following each of the workshops. The evaluation form was a modified version of the agency's in-service evaluation form. The information obtained from the workshop evaluation form was used to improve the content and presentation of subsequent workshops. A copy of the workshop evaluation form may be found in Appendix C.

Report of Action Taken

During the ten-week implementation period, the solution strategy described was utilized and modified as needed. As previously reported, the solution strategy was designed to involve a series of four parent education workshops and a familiarization visit to the preschool programs, however, the familiarization visit was unable to be carried out. Appendix D contains the actual implementation plan for this

practicum project. The following is a description of each of the four parent education workshops as well as an explanation for the absence of the familiarization visit to the preschool programs.

Workshop #1: The Effects of Transition on Our Lives

The first parent education workshop was held during the fourth week of the implementation period after the following preliminary tasks had been completed: determining which children would be transitioning to preschool within the upcoming 6 months; contacting the parents and preschool staff to determine their availability and interest in the project; determining when and where the parent education workshops would take place; developing and distributing pretest forms to measure stress, anxiety, knowledge, and involvement; meeting with preschool staff for the purpose of coordinating transition activities; sharing information about the children, their families, and program options; working on an interagency agreement regarding transition procedures; and finally, gathering completed pretest forms and collating the information to determine parent needs.

The first workshop, as well as the three to follow, were scheduled on Monday mornings from 9:00 A.M. to 11:00 A.M. The majority of the parents requested Monday due to their child's therapy schedule and indicated a preference for the morning hours because of their child's nap time. Refreshments were provided by the agency and included coffee, juice, and rolls.

The main theme of the first workshop - The Effects of Transition on Our Lives was to encourage parents to share the feelings they experienced during different times of transition and to discuss their feelings, both positive and negative, about the upcoming transition of their child from early intervention to preschool.

The main purpose of this workshop was to help parents realize that all transitions involve changes and when parents are able to prepare themselves and to know what to expect, their stress and anxiety may be minimized.

Several parents spoke about the transition of moving from a northern state to the south. They experienced fear, anxiety, stress, sadness, joy and many other emotions. Two parents spoke about having children and how that change in their lives was exciting, yet very stressful.

I then shifted the conversation from past transitions to transitions in the future. The one transition all the parents had in common was the upcoming transition of their child from early intervention to preschool and the main emotions expressed were stress and anxiety.

The transition to a new setting creates anxiety and raises questions for parents no matter how often they have experienced change before (Fiechtl et al., 1989). Making the change from early intervention to public special education preschool requires parents to spend a great deal of time and energy learning about the new educational system, the IEP process, their legal rights and

responsibilities, and special education and related services (Hanline et al., 1989). Additional stress is placed on parents when they realize that transitioning to a new program not only means relinquishing ties with the familiar setting, but also adjusting to a school that may provide fewer therapies and services.

These and other parent concerns regarding transitions were discussed and future workshop topics were shared so that parents understood that all their concerns would be addressed, however, some of them would be addressed in detail in future workshops.

Workshop #2: Program Options and Services

The second workshop was presented by preschool staff and focused on the different program options and related services that the children may be eligible for upon their exit from the early intervention program.

In preparation for this workshop, parents were asked to write down any questions they had regarding the new placement. The six parents collectively had 27 questions, however some of them overlapped. The preschool staffing specialist addressed the questions and thoroughly explained each topic. Examples of topics discussed were location of placement options; occupational, speech, and physical therapy services; bus schedules; program purpose, content, and structure; evaluation procedures; opportunities for volunteering in the classroom, and school hours.

The discussion of therapy services that would be

provided in the new program was the lengthliest topic. Several of the parents had been told by parents whose children who were already in preschool that therapy services would be cut once they entered the new program. This was a major concern for parents and they wanted some assurance that their child's therapies would continue in the new program.

The preschool staff explained that the children would be evaluated and if found in need of any therapy would receive services at least once a week. The parents were not pleased with the explanation because most of their children currently received therapy two to three times per week. The preschool staff explained about the shortage of therapists, but reminded parents that they would be able to use their Medicaid to receive therapy services after school hours. This pleased the parents because many of them desired to continue with their familiar therapists.

The session concluded with each parent completing the required paperwork for preschool enrollment. Individual assistance was provided to each parent after a brief overview of each form.

Workshop #3: Parent Rights

The third workshop was quite intensive and involved educating parents about their legal rights under P.L. 94-142 and P.L. 99-457, as well as the IEP process.

Most of the parents were unfamiliar with the IEP, therefore, a sample IEP was distributed and discussed. I

explained each section of the plan and its importance for the child's educational program. Short and long term goals and objectives were described since they are a vital part of a child's IEP.

Parents were educated about the two laws that affect their child. Several of the parents were familiar with P.L. 99-457, The Education of the Handicapped Amendments of 1986, since that law is the one that enabled their child to be eligible for the early intervention program that they were enrolled in. More specifically, the parents were familiar with Part H of the law which paid for their child's early intervention program and therapy services up to the age of 3 years. The Family Support Plan (FSP) was also a familiar requirement of P.L. 99-457, as it was the authorizing document for all services received.

The Education for all Handicapped Children Act (P.L. 94-142) was a law that parents were unfamiliar with. Much time was spent educating parents about the content of this law including the least restrictive environment, parent involvement in the placement process, and due process procedures. Parents were not only given an indepth explanation of each of these topics, but were given a pamphlet on the topics as well. Discussion focused on hearings in which parents have the right to retain counsel, call witnesses, inspect school records and secure an independent evaluation of their child's educational status. This topic was raised when one parent asked what would happen if she disagreed with the placement of her child.

Workshop #4: Transition Planning

The fourth workshop focused on developing a written transition plan for each child and involved parents, the preschool staffing specialist, and staff from the preschool and early intervention programs. "The key to successful transition planning and implementation is participation by all key personnel and parents" (Everson, 1990, p. 45). Key personnel must be involved so that the seven expected outcomes of transition planning may be realized. These include: (1) Parents recognizing the importance of systematic planning for their children's future needs; (2) Parents acquiring skills that can be applied to future transitions; (3) Parents learning to be active participants in the intervention process; (4) Services being delivered with minimal disruptions ensuring program continuity; (5) Minimization of role ambiguity amount service providers; (6) Program administrators budgeting more effectively for future fiscal needs; and (7) Parents and service providers learning the benefits of collaborative efforts in achieving transition goals that can be generalized across other situations and settings (Lazzari & Kilgo, 1989).

The activities that occurred to help achieve the expected outcomes of transition planning included writing down all the activities, strategies, roles and responsibilities of key personnel, and a timeline for transition planning procedures. Specific information contained in the written transition plan included: (a) what

records were to be sent; (b) who would send them; (c) when they should be sent; (d) who must receive them; (e) who would make personal contact with which school district staff members and when; (f) what placement would be requested of the district; (g) what services would be requested in the placement; and (h) ways to monitor the child's success in the placement throughout the year (Fiechtl et al., 1989).

Each parent left the transition planning workshop with a written plan for their child, as well as transition skills which would help them in future transition planning.

Familiarization Visit to the Preschool Programs

"Involving parents in a pretransition visit is always beneficial" (Hanline et al., 1989, p. 61). "Arranging a time for students to attend the new class or program and meet new personnel prior to exiting the old program helps lessen the stress of the unknown" (O'Shea, 1994, p. 30). "Since the primary goal of transition is to move the child into an appropriate program, children can and should be involved in visiting the receiving program alternatives before the final placement decision is made" (Hutinger, 1981, p. 10).

The literature clearly states the importance of visiting placement options, however, due to circumstances beyond my control, no site visits were made. Preschool staff did not follow through on their commitment to permit the parents to view the placement options. The reasons they gave were confidentiality and classroom preselection.

Confidentiality refers to the right to privacy for the children already enrolled in the preschool program. In attempting to work around this concern, I suggested holding the site visits after school hours. This situation might have allowed for more one-on-one with the classroom teacher and family. Unfortunately, I was told that visiting any classroom was not permitted due to the idea of preselection.

Preschool staff explained that preselection or choosing the classroom desired, could not be permitted because no guarantee could be given to parents that their child would be able to be placed in the program option visited. I became convinced that the preschool staff simply did not want to cooperate in any type of site visit. Implications regarding the absence of the familiarization visit to the preschool programs will be discussed in Chapter Six.

Chapter Five

Results

In this chapter, the results of the implementation phase will be reported. Additionally, the goals and objectives, as set forth in Chapter Three, will be discussed in terms of whether or not each was met. Finally, the results of the workshop evaluation forms will be provided.

Pre and Post Test Results

Six parents of children who will turn 3 years old within the next 6 months and will be transitioning from early intervention to preschool, participated in the series of parent eduction workshops designed for the purpose of increasing their knowledge and involvement levels and decreasing their stress and anxiety levels. These six parents were chosen because they had children who were nearly 3 years of age. There were only two other parents who had children nearly 3 years old, however, they were unable to participate in the workshops due to their work schedules.

The pre and post tests were administered in an interview format and were presented verbally to parents. They were composed of 16 items, including open and closed-ended questions and Likert scale rating questions. A sample pretest/posttest form has been included as Appendix E.

The pre and post test results indicate that the parent education workshops were successful in what they set out to

do. There was a positive change in all items except one; the likelihood of visiting program options; however, a valid reason for this was given in Chapter Four.

The largest change in test scores occurred in the item concerning the likelihood of participation in writing a transition plan. Before the intervention, five out of six parents indicated that they were either "very unlikely" or "somewhat unlikely" to participate in writing a transition plan. The mean score for this item was 2.0, where 1 = very unlikely and 4 = very likely, as indicated in Table 5. Following the intervention, all six parents indicated that they were "very likely" to participate in writing a transition plan. Table 5 reflects this unanimous response of 4.0.

The results of the pre and post tests also indicate that the parent education workshops were successful in increasing the knowledge level of parents regarding the purpose of preschool education programs. As shown in Table 5, the pretest scores indicate that the mean score was 2.0, where 1 = very low and 4 = very high. The posttest scores, also shown in Table 5, reveal that the mean score for parents' knowledge level regarding preschool programs was 3.5. Before the parent education workshops were held, five of the six parents indicated that their knowledge level of the purpose of preschool special education programs was either "very low" or "somewhat low." After the intervention, however, four of the six parents indicated

Table 5

Mean Scores of Parent Responses on Pre and Posttests

Issue	Mean Score Pretest	Posttest
Likelihood of participating in writing a transition plan	2.0	4.0
Knowledge level of purpose of preschool special education programs	2.0	3.5
Knowledge level of content of preschool special education programs	1.8	3.5
Knowledge level of structure of preschool special education programs	2.0	3.7
Knowledge level of Individualized Education Plan (IEP)	1.6	3.5
Comfort level in allowing child to enter preschool program	2.3	3.3
Stress level	3.2	1.5
Anxiety level	3.2	1.5
Likelihood of participation in visiting program options	2.2	2.2
Knowledge level of locations of placement options	3.0	3.2
Awareness of support services	2.2	3.7
Awareness of parental rights	2.5	3.5
Likelihood of inquiring about services in the preschool program	2.3	3.5
Likelihood of discussing transition-related concerns with others	1.8	3.2

Scale: 1-4, where 1= low amount and 4= high amount

that their knowledge level on this item was either "relatively high" or "very high."

Another item where there was a great increase in the mean score was the item concerning the knowledge level of the content of preschool education programs. Before the parent education workshops were held, five out of the six parents indicated that their knowledge level regarding the content of preschool special education programs was either "very low" or "somewhat low." The mean score for this item was a low 1.8, as shown in Table 5. Following the implementation phase, all six parents indicated that their knowledge level concerning this item was either "relatively high" or "very high." The mean score for this item on the posttest was 3.5, as also indicated in Table 5.

Before the parent education workshops were held, five out of the six parents indicated that their knowledge level regarding the structure of the preschool special education programs was either "very low" or "somewhat low." The mean score for this item was 2.0 on the pretest, as indicated in Table 5. Following the intervention, all six parents indicated their knowledge level as being either "relatively high" or "very high." The mean score reflects this increase in knowledge with a mean of 3.7, as indicated in Table 5.

Pretest scores reflect that parents have limited knowledge regarding Individualized Education Plans (IEP's). Several of the parents even asked me what an IEP was during the pretest. This item had a mean of 1.6, where 1 = very

low and 4 = very high, as indicated in Table 5. Following the parent education workshops, all six parents indicated either a "relatively high" or "very high" knowledge level of the IEP. The mean score for this item on the posttest was 3.5, as shown in Table 5.

The parent education workshops were very successful in increasing the comfort level of parents in allowing their child to attend a preschool special education program at age 3. The mean score on the pretest was 2.3, where 1 = very uncomfortable and 4 = very comfortable, while the posttest scores increased to 3.3. Both of these scores may be found in Table 5.

The parent education workshops were also very successful in decreasing both the stress and anxiety levels of parents as they relate to the transition process. Before the intervention, five out of six parents indicated that their stress and anxiety levels were either "very high" or "relatively high." The mean scores for both stress and anxiety on the pretest were 3.2, where 1 = very low and 4 = very high, as shown in Table 5. Following the intervention, the parents' stress and anxiety levels decreased and all six parents indicated that both their stress and anxiety levels were either "very low" or "relatively low." The mean scores on the posttest were 1.5 for both stress and anxiety, as shown in Table 5.

The one item that did not show a positive change was the likelihood of visiting program options. Pretest scores

reflect a mean of 2.2, where 1 = very unlikely and 4 = very likely, as shown in Table 5. Posttest scores also show a mean of 2.2, as also shown in Table 5. There was no change in scores probably due to the fact that no familiarization visits to the preschool programs were held which would have allowed parents to view the placement options.

The three major concerns of parents as identified on the pretest were 1) apprehension about being separated from their child, 2) anxiety about sending their child to an unfamiliar program and 3) the uncertainty that their child would receive appropriate services. Following the parent education workshops, one concern predominated - the apprehension regarding the failure of the preschool programs to allow site visits. The parents indicated that if they could view the classes in session then they would feel more at ease in transitioning their child from one program to another.

Results for Practicum Goal

As stated in Chapter Three, the overall goal for this practicum project was for parents to become more knowledgeable about and involved in what happens during their child's transition, as well as to become more knowledgeable about what the new program entails so that the stress and anxiety they undergo may be kept to a minimum.

Following the completion of the solution strategy, test results show that, in fact, parents indicated that they were more knowledgeable and involved in their child's transition

and were experiencing less stress and anxiety as a result of the parent education workshops. Table 5 contains the complete pre and post test survey results.

Four specific objectives were developed for the purpose of meeting the practicum goal. The results for each will be described below.

Results for Objective One

The first objective was to increase the knowledge level of parents who have children transitioning from early intervention to public preschool regarding the transition process, as measured by pre and post test results. There were five questions related to the knowledge level of parents regarding the transition process on the pretest. The mean item response on the pretest for the five questions pertaining to the knowledge level of parents regarding the transition process was 2.1. The scale on which these items were measured was 1-4, where 1= low amount and 4= high amount.

Following the implementation phase, the posttest scores indicate that the mean item response for the items relating to the knowledge level of parents regarding the transition process increased to 3.5. The pre and post test results show that the mean score for the parents knowledge levels regarding the transition process increased by 1.4, indicating that the first objective was met.

Results for Objective Two

As stated in Chapter Three, the second objective was to

decrease the stress level of parents whose children were transitioning from early intervention to preschool, as measured by pre and post test results. On the pretest, the six parents were asked to rate their stress level on one Likert scale question, where 1 = very low stress and 4 = very high stress. The mean item response on the pretest for this item was 3.2.

Following the implementation phase, the posttest scores indicate that the mean item response for the question relating to the parents' stress levels decreased to 1.5. Pre and post test results then, show that the mean score for parents' stress levels decreased by 1.7, indicating that the second objective was met.

Results for Objective Three

The third objective was to decrease the anxiety level of parents whose 3-year-old children were transitioning from early intervention to preschool, as measured by pre and post test results. On the pretest, the six parents rated their anxiety level using a Likert scale rating question where 1 = very low anxiety and 4 = very high anxiety. The mean item response on the pretest for the question relating to the anxiety level of parents was 3.2.

Following the implementation phase, the posttest scores indicate that the mean item response for the item relating to the anxiety levels of parents decreased to 1.5. Pre and post test results then, show that the mean score for parents' anxiety levels decreased by 1.7, indicating that the third objective was met.

Results for Objective Four

The fourth and final objective was to increase the active participation of parents in the transition process, as measured by pre and post test results. There were four questions designed to gather information on the involvement of parents in the transition process. The mean item response on the pretest for the four questions pertaining to the involvement levels of parents in the transition process was 2.1; using a scale from 1-4, where 1= low amount and 4= high amount.

Following the implementation phase, the posttest scores indicate that the mean item response for the items pertaining to the parents' involvement increased to 3.2. Pre and post test results then, show that the mean score for parents' likelihood of becoming involved in the transition process increased by 1.1, indicating that this fourth and final objective was met.

Results for Workshop Evaluation

Following each of the four parent education workshops, the parents completed a workshop evaluation form. The evaluation form was designed to give each parent the opportunity to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of each workshop.

The workshop evaluation form consisted of 16 items including open and closed-ended questions, as well as Likert scale rating questions. The parents completed the evaluation forms independently and were instructed to be

open and honest so that future workshops may be improved upon.

The results of the workshop evaluation forms indicate that parents found the four workshops to be very satisfactory. Using a rating scale where 1 = inferior and 5 = superior, parents indicated a mean of 4.5 for the quality of the material presented in all four workshops.

The workshop evaluation forms also indicate that the parents felt the subject matter presented was neither "too simple" nor "too complicated." The average of the mean scores of all four workshops was 3.0, where 1 = too simple and 5 = too complicated.

Five out of the six parents indicated that they had adequate time to ask questions. The mean score for the four workshops was 2.8, where 1 = too short and 5 = too long.

The results of the workshop evaluation form also indicated that parents found the information in all four workshops to be useful. The mean score for the usefulness of the information presented in all four workshops was 4.5, where 1 = not at all useful and 5 = highly useful. More specifically, all six parents found the information in workshops #1 - The Effects of Transition on Our Lives and #4 - Transition Planning, to be highly useful as it relates to their child's transition, as shown by the mean scores of 5.0 for each.

Finally, the results of the workshop evaluation form show that parents rated the four workshops as being very

high in overall quality when quality, relevance of content, method of presentation, and presenter's ability to hold the group's interest were considered. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 = lowest quality possible and 10 = highest quality possible, the mean score for the four workshops was 9.5.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

In this final chapter, the implications of the results of this practicum project will be reported and recommendations for future modifications will be provided.

Implications of Results

As the literature and this study indicate, parents experience stress and anxiety during the transition of their child from early intervention to preschool (Fowler, 1982; Fowler, 1988; Chandler, 1993; Handline et al., 1989; Bray et al., 1981; Johnson et al., 1986; Spiegel-McGill et al., 1990; Hanline 1988). Among the many reasons for this stress and anxiety include: lack of preparation; lack of knowledge about placement option locations; limited knowledge about the purpose, content and structure of the preschool programs; abruptness of the transition, and lack of parent involvement in the transition. Several models and strategies, such as those shared in Chapter Four, as well as the solution strategy described here, are needed to successfully address the problem of transition-related stress and anxiety.

The solution strategy developed and implemented during this practicum project may serve as a guide for other programs that have similar problems relating to parental stress and anxiety regarding the transition from early intervention to preschool. The parent education workshops proved to be successful in decreasing the stress and anxiety

of parents while also increasing their knowledge and involvement levels. The benefits of the parent education workshops enabled parents to feel prepared for the transition of their child from early intervention to preschool. As a result, they were better equipped to prepare their child for his or her transition. The parent education workshops helped empower parents and gave them more confidence in their roles as parents. The knowledge they gained and the experiences they shared will help them through many future transitions and will ultimately benefit the children.

The extent of the impact of the absence of the familiarization visit to the preschool programs is uncertain, however, it is felt that parents would experience less stress and anxiety if they were permitted to visit the programs that their child would soon be attending.

Visiting placement options is one method of helping to smooth the way for both parents' and their child's adjustment to new and different environments. These visits help assure parents that the new program staff are available and willing to provide ongoing communication regarding the needs of each child. Parents need to feel comfortable about their child's new program or their stress and anxiety levels will increase.

Visiting with preschool staff during their free periods or after school would also enable parents to communicate with the child's possible placement teacher. All placement

options should be explored so that parents will feel comfortable in their child's ultimate placement. Visiting all placement options when students are not in class would not infringe upon the preschool's rules of confidentialty or preselection since no students would be present and all options will be visited, not just a particular one.

Pre and post test results show that parents did experience less stress and anxiety after the parent education workshops were held, however, the results also indicate that parents were "somewhat unlikely" to participate in visiting placement options. As stated previously, this item was the only one on the pre and post test forms that showed no change. I feel that the parents would have indicated even less stress and anxiety if they would have been able to visit the placement options.

Several of the parents complained to met about not being permitted to visit the possible placment options. I apologized and explained that I felt the visits were a very crucial component in the transition process, yet I had no say in how the county schools ran their business. I suggested that there was strength in numbers, however, and that if enough parents raised the issue, change may occur in the future. Several parents have since written letters to the school board and are awaiting a response. I believe that visits will be allowed in the near future.

Recommendations

The following modifications are recommended so that

future parents workshops will be more beneficial to parents:

1. Begin the series of parent education workshops when children are approximately 2 years of age in order to give parents as much transition planning time as possible. This modification is needed because several of the children from this practicum project were so close to 3 years old at the time of the parent workshops that their parents had already completed some of the preschool program's paperwork on their own and did not receive the help they needed.

2. Invite a parent or two whose children have recently transitioned to preschool to one of the parent education workshops. This will allow parents to hear a firsthand account of what actually occurs during the staffing and placement into the program. The parents will get a chance to ask any questions they have of the invited parents in order to help ease their upcoming transition.

3. Revise the Workshop Evaluation Form to include a space where parents have the opportunity to suggest workshop topics that they would like to participate in. This modification is necessary in order to insure that the workshop topics are of interest and benefit to parents.

4. Implement the parent education workshops twice a year; once in the spring and once in the fall. This is

necessary to insure that each family gets the opportunity to participate in the workshops at the appropriate time and to insure that the parent education workshop groups not become too large.

5. Continue to encourage preschool staff to permit program option visits and get a written commitment for the visits, if possible, so that parents do not get their hopes up for an event that does not occur. In the event that the preschool staff do not agree to permit familiarization visits in the future, I recommend arranging meetings between each of the possible preschool placement teachers and parents in the actual classroom after school hours or during the teachers' free periods. This would not be considered preselection since the parents would be meeting with each of the possible placement option teachers, not simply the one they choose for their child.

References

American Heritage Dictionary (1976) New York: Dell Publishing Co.

Bailey, B. B., & Simeonsson, R. J. (1984). Critical issues underlying research and intervention with families of young handicapped children. Journal of the Division for Early Childhood, 9, 38-48.

Brandt, C. (1987). The transition process in early intervention: Some considerations. Early Intervention, 1(4), 1-3.

Bray, N., Coleman, J., & Bracken, M. (1981). Critical events in parenting handicapped children. Journal of the Division for Early Childhood, 3, 26-33.

Bricker, D. & Casuso, V. (1979). Family involvement: A critical component of early intervention. Exceptional Children, 46, 108-115.

Chandler, L. K. (1993). Steps in preparing for transition: Preschool to kindergarten. Teaching Exceptional Children, 25(4), 52-55.

Conn-Powers, M. C., Ross-Allen, J., & Holburn, S. (1990). Transition of young children into the elementary education mainstream. Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 9, 91-105.

Dunst, C. J., & Deal, A. G. (1992). Training Part H early intervention practitioners to work effectively with families. OSERS, 5, 25-28.

Dunst, C. J., Trivette, C. M., & Deal, A. G. (1988). Enabling and empowering families: Principles and

guidelines for practice. Cambridge, MA: Brookline Books.

Everson, J. M. (1990). A local team approach. Teaching Exceptional Children, 23(1), 44-46.

Fiechtl, B., Rule, S., & Innocenti, M. S. (1989). It's time to get ready for school. Teaching Exceptional Children, 21, 63-65.

Fowler, S.A. (1988). Promising programs: Transition planning. Teaching Exceptional Children, 20(4), 62-63.

Fowler, S.A. (1982). Transition from preschool to kindergarten for children with special needs. In K. E. Allen & E. M. Goetz (Eds.), Early childhood education: Special problems, special solutions (pp. 309-330). Rockville, MD: Aspen.

Fowler, S. A., Chandler, L. K., Johnson, T. E., & Stella, M. E. (1988). Individualizing family involvement in school transitions: Gathering information and choosing the next program. Journal of the Division for Early Childhood, 12, 208-216.

Fowler, S. A., Hains, A. H., & Rosenkoetter, S. E. (1990). The transition between early intervention services and preschool services: Administrative and policy issues. Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 9, 55-65.

Fowler, S. A., Rosenkoetter, S. E., & Hains, A. H. (1991). The status of transition planning for preschool to kindergarten by one state's local education agencies. Final report to the Kansas State Department of Education.

Fowler, S. A., Schwartz, I. & Atwater, J. (1991). Perspectives on the transition from preschool to

kindergarten for children with disabilities and their families. Exceptional Children, 58(2), 136-145.

Hains, A. H., Fowler, S. A., & Chandler, L. K. (1988). Planning school transitions: Family and professional collaboration. Journal of the Division for Early Childhood, 12, 108-115.

Hamblin-Wilson, C., & Thurman, S. K. (1990). The transition from early intervention to kindergarten: Parental satisfaction and involvement. Journal of Early Intervention, 14, 55-61.

Hanline, M. F. (1988). Making the transition to preschool: Identification of parent needs. Journal of the Division for Early Childhood, 12(2), 98-107.

Hanline, M. F., & Knowlton, A. (1988). A collaborative model for providing support to parents during their child's transition from infant intervention to preschool special education public school programs. Journal of the Division for Early Childhood. 12(2), 116-125.

Hanline, M. F., Suchman, S., & Demmerle, C. (1989). Beginning public preschool. Teaching Exceptional Children, 21, 61-62.

Hutinger, P. (1981). Transition practices for handicapped young children: What the experts say. Journal of the Division for Early Childhood, 2, 8-14.

Johnson, T. E., Chandler, L. K., Kerns, G. M., & Fowler, S. A. (1986). What are parents saying about family involvement in school transitions? A retrospective transition interview. Journal of the Division for Early

Childhood, 11, 10-17.

Kilgo, J. L., Richard, N., & Noonan, M. J. (1989). Teaming for the future: Integrating transition planning with early intervention services for young children with special needs and their families. Infants and Young Children, 2, 37-48.

Lazzari, A. M., & Kilgo, J. L. (1989). Practical methods for supporting parents in early transitions. Teaching Exceptional Children, 22, 40-43.

Lowenthal, B. 1987). Stress factors and their alleviation in parents of high-risk pre-term infants. The Exceptional Child, 34, 21-30.

McBride, S. L., Brotherson, M. J., Joanning, H., Whidden, D., & Demmitt, A. (1993). Implementation of family-centered services: Perceptions of families and professionals. Journal of Early Intervention, 17(4), 414-430.

McDonald, L., Kysela, G. M., Siebert, P., McDonald, S., & Chambers, J. (1989). Parent perspectives: Transition to preschool. Teaching Exceptional Children, 22, 4-8.

McKenzie, R. G., & Houk, C. S. (1993). Across the great divide: Transition from elementary secondary settings for students with mild disabilities. Teaching Exceptional Children, 25(2), 16-20.

O'Shea, D. J. (1994). Modifying daily practices to bridge transitions. Teaching Exceptional Children, 26(4), 29-34.

Part B, Education of the Handicapped Act Amendments of

1986, Public Law 99-457. (22 September, 1986). Congressional Record, 132(125).

Regulations implementing IDEA Part B, C.F.R. Part 300, Assistance to states for education of children with disabilities, 1993.

Rice, M. L., & O'Brien, M. (1990). Transitions: Times of change and accommodation. Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 9, 1-14.

Smith, P. M. (1992). Parents: The critical team members. OSERS, 5, 34-36.

Spiegel-McGill, P., Reed, D. J., Konig, C. S., & McGowan, P. A. (1990). Parent education: Easing the transition to preschool. Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 9, 66-77.

Turnbull, A., Turbiville, V., Jones, L., & Lee, I. (1992). A family-responsive approach to the development of the individualized family service plan. OSERS, 5, 12-15.

Vincent, L. J. (1992). Implementing individualized family service planning in urban, culturally diverse early intervention settings. OSERS, 5, 29-33.

Welsh, M. M., & Odum, C. S. (1981). Parent involvement in the education of the handicapped child: A review of the literature. Journal of the Division for Early Childhood, 2(3), 15-25.

Wheeler, W. P., Reetz, L. J., & Wheeler, J. J. (1993). Facilitating effective transitions in early intervention services: Parent involvement. Rural Special Education Quarterly, 12(1), 55-60.

Wiegerink, R. & Comfort, M. (1987). Parent involvement: Support for families of children with special needs. In S. Kagan, D. Powell, B. Weissbourd, & E. Zigler (Eds.), America's family support programs (pp. 182-200). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Wolery, M. (1989). Transitions in early childhood special education: Issues and procedures. Focus on Exceptional Children, 22, 1-16.

Yoshida, R. K., Fenton, K. F., Kaufman, M. J., & Maxwell, J. P. (1978). Parental involvement in the special education pupil planning process: The school's perspective. Exceptional Children, 44(7), 531-534.

APPENDIX A

Parent Interview Form

Parent Interview Form

1. **How active were you in your child's transition from the early intervention program to the public preschool program?** (Please circle the number that corresponds your answer:)

   1 = very inactive
   2 = somewhat inactive
   3 = relatively active
   4 = very active

2. **How old was your child when you were notified that he/she was eligible for preschool in the public schools?**

   _____ months

3. **How much notice were you given of your child's staffing date for the public preschool program?**

   _____ week(s)

4. **Were you given the opportunity to visit each placement option before your child's staffing?**

   _____ yes _____ no

5. **Did the public school staff explain your parental rights and responsibilities as they relate to your child's education?**

   _____ yes _____ no

6. **Which of the following support services were explained to you?** (Check all that apply)

   bus transportation _____
   lunch program _____
   occupational therapy _____
   physical therapy _____
   speech therapy _____

7. **How much influence did you have on the placement decision?** (Please circle the number that corresponds to your answer:)

   1 = none
   2 = very little
   3 = A fair amount
   4 = A great amount

8. **After the placement decision was made, did you have the opportunity to meet the receiving teacher with your child before the first day of school?**

_____ yes _____ no

9. **How much explanation did you receive on home-school communication from the receiving teacher?** (Please circle the number that corresponds to your answer:)

1 = none
2 = very little
3 = A fair amount
4 = A great amount

10. **Were the major steps in the transition process planned ahead with you by the early intervention staff?**

_____ yes _____ no

11. **How much assistance were you offered by the school system in completing the required paperwork for your child's placement in the preschool program?** (Please circle the number that corresponds to your answer:)

1 = none
2 = very little
3 = A fair amount
4 = A great amount

12. **Did the early intervention staff (sending teacher) meet with the preschool staff (receiving teacher) during the transition process?**

_____ yes _____ no

13. **To what degree has the early intervention program staff followed up with you to see if you and your child are satisfied with the new program?** (Please circle the number that corresponds to your answer:)

1 = not at all
2 = very little
3 = somewhat
4 = extensively

14. **What was your knowledge level about the transition process before it began?** (Please circle the number that corresponds to your answer:)

    1 = very low
    2 = somewhat low
    3 = relatively high
    4 = very high

15. **How satisfied were you with the opportunity you were given to participate in the formulation of your child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP)?** (Please circle the number that corresponds to your answer:)

    1 = very unsatisfied
    2 = somewhat unsatisfied
    3 = relatively satisfied
    4 = very satisfied

16. **How would you describe your anxiety level during your child's transition to preschool?** (Please circle the number that corresponds to your answer:)

    1 = very high
    2 = relatively high
    3 = somewhat low
    4 = very low

17. **How important do you think it is for sending and receiving teachers to meet during the transition process?** (Please circle the number that corresponds to your answer:)

    1 = very unimportant
    2 = somewhat unimportant
    3 = relatively important
    4 = very important

18. **How would you describe your stress level during your child's transition to preschool?** (Please circle the number that corresponds to your answer:)

    1 = very high
    2 = relatively high
    3 = somewhat low
    4 = very low

19. **How clear did you find the explanation of your parental rights as provided by the public preschool staff?** (Please circle the number that corresponds to your answer:)

    1 = very unclear
    2 = somewhat unclear
    3 = relatively clear
    4 = very clear

20. **Do you think you received enough notice of your child's transition into the public preschool program?**

    _____ yes _____ no

21. **How long before a child's entrance into preschool do you think transition planning should begin?**

    _____ months

22. **What three suggestions do you have for making the transition process smoother for children and their families?**

    _____

    _____

    _____

APPENDIX B

Staff Interview Form

Staff Interview Form

1. **Do you provide training for parents at the beginning of the transition year?**

   yes _____ no _____

2. **How adequately are each of the following topics pertaining to the preschool program explained?** (Please use the following rating scale and place the number that corresponds to your answer on the lines provided for items a - d.)

   1 = very inadequately
   2 = somewhat inadequately
   3 = adequately
   4 = very adequately

   a. **Purpose** ____

   b. **Structure** ____

   c. **Content** ____

   d. **Locations** ____

3. **Are the parents offered the opportunity to view the placement options before their child's staffing?**

   yes ____ no _____

4. **How much assistance are parents offered in completing the paperwork required for entry into the preschool program?** (Please circle the number that corresponds to your answer:)

   1 = none
   2 = very little
   3 = a fair amount
   4 = a great amount

5. **How adequate was the explanation of due process that was given to parents at their child's staffing?** (Please circle the number that corresponds to your answer:)

   1 = very inadequate
   2 = somewhat inadequate
   3 = relatively adequate
   4 = very adequate

6. **Describe the extent of involvement parents are given in the placement decision of the child into the preschool program** (Please circle the number that corresponds to your answer:)

   1 = none
   2 = very little
   3 = a fair amount
   4 = a great amount

7. **How prepared do you think parents are for their child's transition from early intervention to public preschool?** (Please circle the number that corresponds to your answer:)

   1 = very unprepared
   2 = somewhat unprepared
   3 = relatively prepared
   4 = very prepared

8. **How satisfied are you with the current transition process?** (Please circle the number that corresponds to your answer:)

   1 = very unsatisfied
   2 = somewhat unsatisfied
   3 = relatively satisfied
   4 = very satisfied

9. **How important do you think it is for sending and receiving teachers to meet during the transition process?** (Please circle the number that corresponds to your answer:)

   1 = very unimportant
   2 = somewhat unimportant
   3 = relatively important
   4 = very important

10. **What three suggestions do you have that will improve the transition process for parents?**

    _____

    _____

    _____

APPENDIX C

Workshop Evaluation Form

WORKSHOP EVALUATION FORM

NAME OF WORKSHOP _____ DATE _____

Please check the number which best expresses your reaction to each of the following items:

		1	2	3	4	5	
1.	The quality of the material presented was	Inferior					Superior
2.	The subject matter presented was	Too Simple					Too Complicated
3.	The coverage of the subject was	Inadequate					Very Adequate
4.	The presenter's knowledge of the subject was	Very Poor					Excellent
5.	The ability of the presenter to get the subject across clearly was	Very Poor					Excellent
6.	The presenter's ability to lead the group was	Very Poor					Excellent
7.	Considering the content of the workshop, the methods of instruction were	Very Ineffective					Very Effective
8.	The time allowed to ask questions or seek clarification was	Too Short					Too Long
9.	Considering the amount of material covered, the time allotted for the workshop was	Too Short					Too Long
10.	As it relates to my child's transition, I found the information to be	Not At All Useful					Highly Useful
11.	The facilities in which the workshop was held were	Very Uncomfortable					Very Comfortable
12.	Overall, I consider this workshop	Very Poor					Excellent

13. Describe the strongest feature of the workshop: _____

14. Describe the weakest feature of the workshop: _____

15. Please rate this workshop on a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 representing the highest quality possible. Please consider quality and relevance of content, method of presentation, and presenter's ability to hold the group's interest. _____

16. Please provide me with any comments which might help improve future sessions: _____

APPENDIX D

Implementation Plan

Implementation Plan

The following activities were designed to meet the objectives as stated in Chapter Three. The activities are listed in sequential order, although several of the activities took place during the same time frame. In order to present the implementation plan in a clear and concise manner, the following format will be utilized: (1) the activity will be described, (2) the person responsible for the activity will be identified, (3) the objective of the workshop will be identified when necessary, and, (4) the time frame will be identified.

Activity 1: Determining which children would be transitioning to preschool within the upcoming 6 months.

Responsible Person: I was responsible for this activity.

Time Frame: week one

Activity 2: Contacting the parents of these children to determine their availability and interest in the project.

Responsible Person: I was responsible for this activity.

Time Frame: week one

Activity 3: Contacting preschool staff to determine their availability and interest in the project.

Responsible Person: I was responsible for this activity.

Time Frame: week one

Activity 4: Determining when and where the parent education workshops would take place.

Responsible Person: I was responsible for this activity.

Time Frame: week two

Activity 5: Developing and distributing pretest forms to measure stress, anxiety, knowledge and involvement of parents prior to the parent education workshops.

Responsible Person: I was responsible for this activity.

Time Frame: week two

Activity 6: Meeting with staff from preschool for the purpose of coordinating transition activities; sharing information about the children, their families, and program options; and working on an interagency agreement regarding transition procedures.

Responsible Person: I was responsible for this activity.

Time Frame: week three

Activity 7: Gathering completed pretest forms and collating the information to determine parent needs.

Responsible Person: I was responsible for this activity.

Time Frame: week three

Activity 8: Conducting parent education workshop on topic of The Effects of Transition on Our Lives.

Responsible Person: I was responsible for this activity.

Objective of Workshop: To encourage parents to discuss feelings of stress and anxiety regarding transitions so that those feelings may be addressed by staff.

Time Frame: week four

Activity 9: Conducting parent education workshop on topic of Program Options and Services.

Responsible Person: A staff member from the preschool program was responsible for this activity.

Objective of Workshop: To help parents gain new knowledge about the programs and services that are available for their children in the preschool program, as well as program purpose, content, structure and locations of these programs.

Time Frame: week five

Activity 10: Conducting parent education workshop on topic of Parent Rights.

Responsible Person: I was responsible for this activity.

Objective of Workshop: To help parents increase their knowledge levels regarding assessment, placement and the IEP process in addition to learning about their legal rights under P.L. 94-142 and P.L. 99-457.

Time Frame: week six

Activity 11: Conducting a parent education workshop on topic of Transition Planning.

Responsible Person: I shared in presenting this topic with the preschool staffing speciálist.

Objective of Workshop: To help parents discover the importance of a written transition plan, the importance of sending and receiving teachers meeting and to help them write a transition plan for thier child.

Time Frame: week seven

Activity 12: Conducting a familiarization visit to preschool programs for the purpose of viewing placement options and meeting receiving teachers.

Responsible Person: I attempted to arrange this activity with the help of preschool staff members.

Objective of Workshop: To give parents the opportunity to view all the placement options, meet the receiving teacher and have any questions answered regarding the transition process.

Time Frame: week eight

Activity 13: Distributing posttest forms to measure the success of the intervention.

Responsible Person: I was responsible for this activity.

Time Frame: week nine

Activity 14: Gathering completed posttest forms and compiling the results.

Responsible Person: I was responsible for this activity.

Time Frame: after week ten

APPENDIX E

Pretest/Posttest Form

Pretest/Posttest

1. **Are you aware that your child may be eligible for preschool in the public schools when he/she turns 3 years of age?**

   yes _____ no _____

2. **Describe your knowledge level of each of the following topics.** (Please use the following rating scale and place the number that corresponds to your answer on the lines provided for items 2a - 2e.)

   1 = very low
   2 = somewhat low
   3 = relatively high
   4 = very high

2a. **Locations of the possible placement options**

   Answer: _____

2b. **Purpose of the preschool special education programs**

   Answer: _____

2c. **Content of the preschool special education programs**

   Answer: _____

2d. **Structure of the preschool special education programs**

   Answer: _____

2e. **Individualized Education Plan (IEP) that will be designed for your child**

   Answer: _____

3. **How aware are you of the different support services that may be offered to your child in the public preschool special education program?** (Please circle the number that corresponds to your answer:)

   1 = totally unaware
   2 = somewhat unaware
   3 = relatively aware
   4 = very aware

4. **How aware are you of your rights as the parent of an exceptional student?** (Please circle the number that corresponds to your answer:)

   1 = very unaware
   2 = somewhat unaware
   3 = relatively aware
   4 = very aware

5. **How comfortable are you in allowing your child to attend a public preschool special education program when he/she turns 3 years of age?** (Please circle the number that corresponds to your answer:)

   1 = very uncomfortable
   2 = somewhat uncomfortable
   3 = relatively comfortable
   4 = very comfortable

6. **How would you describe your stress level as it relates to your child's transition to preschool?** (Please circle the number that corresponds to your answer:) following rating scale:)

   1 = very low
   2 = relatively low
   3 = somewhat high
   4 = very high

7. **How would you describe your anxiety level as it relates to your child's upcoming transition to preschool?** (Please circle the number that corresponds to your answer:)

   1 = very low
   2 = relatively low
   3 = somewhat high
   4 = very high

8. **How likely are you to participate in the following activities considering the knowledge you now have regarding transitions?** (Please use the following rating scale and place the number that corresponds to your answer on the lines provided for items 8a-8d.

   1 = very unlikely
   2 = somewhat unlikely
   3 = relatively likely
   4 = very likely

8a. **Visiting program options**

Answer: _____

8b. **Inquiring about related services in the preschool program**

Answer: _____

8c. **Writing a transition plan**

Answer: _____

8d. **Discussing your transition related concerns with others**

Answer: _____

9. **What three things about your child's upcoming transition cause you to feel stress?**

_____

_____

_____